

Message Text

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21

ACTION EA-09

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-04 H-02 INR-07 L-03

NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 PRS-01 SP-02 SS-15 USIA-06 SCS-03

FBO-02 SCCT-01 DHA-02 AID-05 CCO-00 OC-05 OPR-02

USSS-00 SCA-01 A-01 OMB-01 SY-05 SIL-01 LAB-04 IGA-01

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P R 240917Z SEP 75

FM AMEMBASSY VIENTIANE

TO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 5339

INFO AMEMBASSY BANGKOK

AMCONSUL UDORN

CINCPAC

C O N F I D E N T I A L VIENTIANE 5741

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PFOR, LA, US

SUBJ: DISMISSED CASUAL-HIRE GUARDS

REF: VIENTIANE 5730

1. CHARGE AND POL COUNSELOR RAISED THIS SUBJECT WITH MFA SEC-GEN NAKKHALA SOUVANNAVONG AND CHEF DE CABINET SOUBANH SRITHIRATH, RESPECTIVELY, AT AIRPORT JUST BEFORE LATTER TWO BOARDED AIR FRANCE FLIGHT FOR PARIS. BOTH LAO EXPRESSED IGNORANCE OF AND LACK OF INTEREST IN POTENTIAL PROBLEM. SOUBANH MERELY ENDORSED IDEA OF DISCUSSION SEPT 24 WITH HIS SUBORDINATE SOUKTHAVONG KEOLA.

2. POL COUNSELOR CALLED ON SOUKTHAVONE MORNING SEPTEMBER 24 AND OUTLINED POTENTIAL PROBLEM, INCLUDING EVIDENCE OF NEO LAO HAK SAT ENCOURAGEMENT OF OR INVOLVEMENT WITH THE 13 (VICE 14 REPORTED REFTEL)
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DISSATISFIED GUARDS. SOUKTHAVONE SAID HE WOULD

LOOK INTO MATTER, CLAIMING NO PRIOR KNOWLEDGE, AND AGREED TO RECEIVE TELEPHONE INQUIRY AS TO RESULTS AT 1400 HOURS LOCAL SEPT 25, ONE HOUR BEFORE TIME AT WHICH GUARDS' STATEMENT OF SEPT 23 SAYS THEY WILL APPEAR AT EMBASSY. SOUKTHAVONE AT LEAST APPEARED TO GRASP EMBASSY POSITION THAT CASUAL-HIRE EMPLOYEES WHO HAD WORKED FOR LESS THAN 90 DAYS COULD HARDLY EXPECT THREE MONTHS' EXTRA PAY TO TIDE THEM OVER, AND HE ALSO ACKNOWLEDGED THAT IT IS DIFFICULT FOR ANY EMPLOYER IN LAOS AT MOMENT IF, AS OTHER PGNU OFFICIALS HAVE SAID, OLD LABOR CODE IS NOW A DEAD-LETTER. HE WENT SO FAR AS TO EXPRESS DOUBT THAT ANY DEMONSTRATION OR DISRUPTION OF EMBASSY OPERATIONS WOULD OCCUR BUT OBVIOUSLY OFFERED NO GUARANTEES. HE ALSO OFFERED CHARITABLE ASSUMPTION (WHICH WE DOUBT) THAT GUARDS' STATEMENT HAD BEEN PREPARED BEFORE THEY HEARD ADMIN OFFICER SAY EMBASSY WOULD HAVE DEFINITIVE RESPONSE SEPTEMBER 26,

3. COMMENT: WE WOULD BE ON MORE SOLID GROUND IF GUARDS HAD SIGNED STATEMENTS AT OUTSET OF EMPLOYMENT RECORDING THEIR UNDERSTANDING THAT POSITIONS WERE TEMPORARY AND THAT NO SEVERANCE PAY OR OTHER POSSIBLE BENEFITS OF LONGER-TERM EMPLOYMENT WERE INVOLVED. UNFORTUNATELY, CONDITIONS WERE CONVEYED ONLY ORALLY. OUR INTENTION IS TO RECEIVE SMALL NUMBER REPRESENTING TOTAL GROUP OF 13 IF AND WHEN THEY APPEAR AND TO REITERATE POLITELY BUT FIRMLY OUR POSITION THAT WE CAN PAY NOTHING BEYOND WAGES ALREADY PAID FOR ACTUAL PERIODS OF TEMPORARY EMPLOYMENT.

4. ACTION REQUESTED: IF DEPT HAS OTHER IDEAS, WE WOULD APPRECIATE RECEIVING THEM BY RETURN CABLE.
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06 JUL 2006

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